

All-State: New Music Reading Session Recommendations

*The New Music Reading Sessions are always an important part of the All-State Teachers Workshop. Here are the comments and suggestions compiled by Connie Aiken, Douglas Neill and Paul Boese. Where comments disagree, it's because the teachers have different students in mind! * means recommended. ** means highly recommended.*

Levels 1 and 2

arr. Andrew Balent, *Early One Morning*. \$42.00. Gr 1.5. OK level but kids would find it boring. Expressive type melody; tune doesn't seem to finish. This would work for 6th grade. It doesn't capture my imagination, but the kids may take to it.

*Brian Balmages, *Fantasy on a Japanese Folk Song*. \$45.00. Gr 1.5. More sophisticated sound. *Yes!* This is a melody that kids love and the arrangement is better than the arrangement that I currently use. Good piece for 6th grade—nice playable arrangements. The kids would like it with some cultural explanations. This piece has a beautiful melody with nice contemporary harmonies. Every section has an opportunity to be expressive.

*Sara Bongo & Robert Moore, *Stony Brook Waltz*. \$48.00. Gr 2. Maybe for younger level. Nice and very readable. Not many rests—full parts. A nice waltz; introducing the students to $\frac{3}{4}$ using this would be OK; another vanilla piece otherwise. It has very nice part writing. It gives everyone a chance to show off how lyrical they can play.

Bill Calhoun, *Expressions*. \$40.00. Gr 1. Could be a good vibrato piece for older kids if melody was moved into 3rd position. 5-beat up-bow; not a catchy melody for kids. This is a nice ballad, it would work for 7th grade. There are better ballads out there more memorable for students.

Larry Clark, *Capriccio*. \$50.00. Gr 2, but ties were confusing and weird cello bowing. Too repetitive but good for hooked bowings. The bowing is a bit strange—playable by 7th grade. Too repetitive; boring.

Larry Clark, *Colossus*. \$40.00. Gr 0.5, but 2nd viola double each other, way beyond 0.5 grade. Rests would be tricky for a beginner. Not a piece that I would use with elementary kids. Appropriate for 5th grade, but there are better sounding pieces for 5th grade that aren't this boring. This is a possible piece for 1st year players. The challenge will be rests.

*arr. Sandra Dackow, *Robin Hood and Little John*. \$40.00. Gr 1. Nice, fun bass part. 4's on E; works lower half of the bow. Show to elementary staff. This would work well for 8th grade. Sandra Dackow does work that kids enjoy—they know it's more substantial. Everyone enjoyed this one. All

parts get the melody.

*Susan H. Day, *March of the Intrepid*. \$45.00. Gr 1.5. OK level—lots of open A's in cello. Not super exciting but good for bow distribution. This would be great for later 6th grade. Good melody! The students would enjoy this one! This is a catchy tune that gets passed. It looks very good.

arr. Carmen Dragon & Douglas E. Wagner, *America, the Beautiful*. \$45.00. Gr 2.5 with many # and b—more like a Gr 3. Ending doesn't fit the arrangement. Not a winner with kids. It may say easy, but the Carmen Dragon version with the triplets at the end doesn't qualify as easy. Memorable—as a band piece! The melody is familiar. The harmonies are not. That could be a problem or an opportunity.

*Michael Hopkins, *The Frog Prince*. \$42.00. Grade 1+. *Yes!* clever and funny; good for 6th grade elementary tour. I like pieces with narration—this one would be appropriate for early 7th grade. I think the students would find this to be a lot of fun—they like programmatic stuff, and this would fit that bill!

*Richard Meyer, *Pastorella*. \$48.00. Gr 2, should be 2.5 because of $\frac{3}{8}$ time. Good bowings, nice part writing, lovely. Maybe for 8th grade. OK for 6th grade. Even Richard Meyer falls into the trap of confusing slow and easy for good for lower grades. Just because it's a ballad doesn't make it easy.

**Richard Meyer, *Viola Country*. \$48.00. Gr 2. Wonderful piece, one of the best of our reading session. Richard Meyer's daughter plays viola!! Brings out good tone for viola and other parts are also interesting. *Buy* this piece for 8th grade. This is a wonderful piece, the star of the morning. This is the work that violists at the middle school level have been waiting for! Gotta do it! This was the hit of the session. It is a good feature for violas with everyone getting a turn at a fun fiddle-style melody.

arr. Deborah Baker Monday, *Ring, Christmas Bells!* \$40.00. Gr 1. Appropriate level. Nice; easy to put together and kids love this tune. Nice arrangement for 7th grade. It would be very good, but we already have a very good arrangement of this carol! This piece would work for players who have been playing one year and need a Christmas piece.

Sean O'Loughlin, *Omicron*. \$40.00. Gr 0.5. OK level for violin because it is only 3 notes over and over but for cello it has extensions. Very repetitive. It may say beginner level, but the extensions in the cello don't fit that assessment. Kind of boring to boot. This piece was rhythmically awkward for 1st year players.

Richard Rigg, *In the Pirate's Wake*. \$48.00. Gr 2. Piece is complicated and then super simple; probably should be a level 3 piece. Accidentals and not good bowings. Dotted 8th 16^{ths} make this tougher than marked. Kids wouldn't like it. All the difficulty of some of the original *Pirate's of the Caribbean* music with none of the payoff.

arr. Patrick Roszell, *Shepherd's Hey*. \$40.00. Gr 2. OK level. Articulation marks for all parts are very specific and helpful. This would work for late 6th or early 7th grade. The melody is wonderful, and the arrangement is OK. Articulations make this piece happen. Melody is shared.

Alan Lee Silva, *Silhouettes*. \$47.00. Gr 1.5. D major and b minor contrast piece. Also contrast legato/marcato, pizz and arco. Another ballad for 6th grade. Kind of vanilla. Not much to grab the kids' attention. Interesting effects used in this piece. Articulations are especially important. I'm not sure if students would take to it right away. This one might have to sink in.

**arr. Carl Strommen, *Leaning on the Everlasting Arms*. \$50.00. Gr 2. Labeled well—melody passes to all sections. Workable and pretty; has rehearsal piano. Very playable by later 6th grade and 7th grade. This would be a perfect piece to give to a quartet or other small group to perform at church. This could be used in a church ensemble. It is a nice arrangement. Violas get to use their C string.

George Sweet, *Ripcord*. \$47.00. Gr 1.5. Awkward 2nd violin part and bowings. Needs drum part; has a band sound. The bowing on this work is not easy. Again, boring to boot. This is very playable by 2nd year players. I would add a trap set and that would make it much more interesting.

Jeremy Woolstenhulme, *Rain Festival*. \$50.00. Gr 2. An exercise piece. Fun syn-copation effects but is boring—too much of a good thing. Good for late 6th grade or early 7th. Too boring and repetitive for the

kids. Fun pizz. Effects with some tricky but teachable rhythms.

*Keiko Yamada, *Mystic Fawn*. \$50.00. Gr 2, should be 2.5 because of extensions. Lovely lines and counterpoint; nice piece. This is a beautiful work, but the cello extensions may move it to 7th grade. If it is presented as a cello teaching tool, the kids may go with it.

Levels 3 and 4

Adolphe Charles Adam/arr. Turner, **O Holy Night*. \$45.00. No grade. Consider for church strings or maybe 8th grade holiday concert. Nice sounding arrangement but need to look over evenness of parts before buying it. Again, too difficult for our middle school orchestras. Good lyrical arrangement!

*Brian Balmages, *Lyric Metal*. \$55.00. Gr 5. Alternate styles; groove cello part; not really a grade 5 piece. Check it out for chamber. Might be OK for 8th grade but check over balance of difficulty of all parts. Gr 5 piece, way beyond any orchestra in our middle school. The kids who play this would love it! Lots of metal fun! This piece could be fun for an intermediate or advanced group.

*Lauren Bernofsky, *Wired*. \$50.00. No grade. Wild for everyone, lots of rests in bass part but when they play it's a good part. Check out for chamber. Check on this piece also as an alternate styles piece for chamber—look again at all parts. This piece would be a challenge for 7th grade, but doable for 8th grade. Bowing would challenge the kids—we could change to suit our group.

David Bobrowitz/ed. Law, *Rondo Energico*. \$50.00. Gr 3.5 but should be Gr 5. Too sophisticated for middle school—need to think rhythms continually. This would be a nice challenge for the 8th grade orchestra. You have to have a strong bass section for this—a very interesting part!

Susan H. Day, *After the Rain*. \$50.00. Gr 3. OK level, 1st violins must shift, could be Gr 2.5. Legato lines, lovely flow. This would be OK for 8th grade. Kind of boring, vanilla.

Daniel DiMarino, *Danse Classique*. \$50.00. Gr 4. Not interesting; not well edited. Didn't read very much of it—no one liked it. Too difficult for 8th grade—and not interesting enough for any upper grade!

Adrian Gordon, *Apocalypse*. \$50.00. Gr

4. Not much content. Slow, legato, short, 2nd and 4th positions—no to this piece. This might be better for 9th grade or higher. It's a good minor ballad; the kids may enjoy the more bittersweet nature of it.

G.F. Handel/arr. Frost, *Lascia Ch'io Pianga*. \$52.00. *Rinaldo*; cartoon piece; bow lifts to frog. Good for phrasing but might not sustain kid's interest. Wonderful piece as Handel goes—more appropriate for 9th grade. Kids would warm to it, but the other better-known pieces of Handel—*Water Music* for example—would be better.

*G.F. Handel/arr. Frost, *Passacaglia*. \$52.00. No grade. Nice. Look over bass part to see if possibility for chamber. Way beyond middle school, obviously. Great arrangement, and lots of fun to play!

*Gustav Holst/arr. McBrien, *In the Bleak Midwinter*. \$48.00. Gr 2.5. D major to F major. Consider for 8th grade holiday concert or church strings. *Nice* writing; lovely. Good lyrical piece for 7th grade. This could fit the bill for an expressive melodic piece for the Christmas concert—kids would warm to it.

Bob Lipton/ed. Law, *Illumination*. \$60.00. Gr 3. Hyperdrive, maybe slightly more content than O'Loughlin *Ides of March*. Heavy metal, legato middle. This is a good 8th grade piece, but a little pop in its sound. Why play this piece, when pop music that the kids would recognize is available?

*Deborah Baker Monday, *Daylight Breaking*. \$52.00. Gr 3, should be grade 2. Boring, mush; wouldn't wear well. Bowings are chosen well. A ballad worthy of 7th or 8th grade. Beautiful work, could persuade kids.

Yukiko Nishimura, *Blue Water*. \$55.00. Gr 4. Weird notation, small notes, all on one page, hard to read, OK parts that are sweet sounding. I don't think kids would gravitate to this piece. Angular writing, boring bass part. Upper string players may enjoy, but not the lower.

*Sean O'Loughlin, *Ides of March*. \$55.00. Gr 3. Hyperdrive piece; repetitive. Kids might like it, rhythmic interplay, maybe not enough content to sustain interest. Good piece, written well for strings!. The kids will love this work—much like his other work! I would classify this piece as a Gr 2.5. It has interesting changes in textures that would be interesting to students.

arr. Bob Phillips, *Wish Liszt*. \$58.00. Gr 5, 2 *bs*. Comes with drum set part; show strings, not a concert piece. Crazy string crossings; high school level. Cute piece; doable by 8th grade—but wouldn't hold the kids' interest.

**Camille Saint-Saens/arr. Halferty, *Carnival of the Animals*. \$52.00. Gr 3. OK for high school orchestra going on elementary tour. Only 3 mvts. Good transcription from full orchestra to string ensemble. This is a great 7th grade or 8th grade challenge piece. The bass solo is shared with the cellos, and the toughest key change section is not in the bass. This has been quality literature since it was written. The kids would enjoy seeing the basses get their due!

*Camille Saint-Saens/arr. Hoffman, *Danse Bacchanale*. \$50.00. Gr 3 with piano. Boring inner parts; bowings are not great. Fun to hear but not for my groups. This would be 8th grade at least—challenging for them!. Wonderful work, and a decent arrangement of it.

Robert Schumann/arr. Caponegro, *Hunting Song*. \$48.00. Gr 2+, but $\frac{6}{8}$ time down-up-up bowing, lots of string crossings, should be 3+. Hard to sound like Schumann because of technical demands. The 8th grade could handle any technical issues, but...as Schumann goes, this isn't the best that can be chosen. It is rated as medium easy. It's trickier than that. There are difficult string crossings and a considerable amount of playing in half position.

*Doug Spata, *Dragonfly*. \$48.00. Gr 2.5 should be 3 or 3.5. Short and rhythmic. Consider for Chamber Orchestra. 2 *bs*, similar to *M to the 3rd Power*—fun piece. Could be a good piece for 8th grade; some technical demands to account for. OK piece; maybe could be made more exciting with good interpretation.

Richard Wagner/arr. Moreno, *Elsa's Procession to the Cathedral*. \$55.00. Gr 5. Regular Wagner, long lines, need tone. Sounds like Wagner—not my favorite. Wagner is full of complex harmonies and many chromatic passages. Too difficult for most groups up until the top high school level. Good arrangement if you can't gather any winds to play a better one.

Thanks to JW Pepper for providing the reading folders for All-State! †